

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Basic Officer Course
The Basic School
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5019

B0332

CONDUCT OF THE PATROL 2**Student Handout**

**"He wins who fires first and can deliver the heaviest fire."
-Erwin Rommel**

INTRODUCTION. Your previous patrolling classes focused on the planning and execution of combat security patrols. This period of instruction, student handout and the article in Appendix A focus on two other equally important patrols: the **ambush patrol** and the **reconnaissance patrol**. Ambush patrols add an offensive punch to the defense by striking the enemy where he feels secure. An effective and aggressive ambush effort can disrupt the enemy's morale and even his scheme of maneuver. Reconnaissance patrols can shape the battlefield in our favor by providing unit commanders with accurate and timely information about terrain and the enemy. Ambush and reconnaissance patrols are basic infantry skills that each Marine must know and understand.

SECTION I: AMBUSH PATROLS

1. **AMBUSH.** An ambush is a surprise attack from a concealed position upon a moving or temporarily halted enemy target.
2. **PURPOSE**
 - a. **Primary.** The primary purpose of an ambush is to **kill enemy troops and destroy their equipment**. The loss of personnel, equipment and supplies reduces the overall combat effectiveness of the enemy.
 - b. **Secondary.** The secondary purpose of an ambush is the **harassment of the enemy and the collection of information** about the enemy. Frequent ambushes will cause the enemy to become more security conscious and divert men from other missions to guard convoys, troop movements, and logistics supply points.
3. **TERMS**
 - a. **Ambush site.** The terrain on which a point ambush is established. It comprises the area that is physically occupied by the members of the ambush patrol and the kill zone.
 - b. **Kill zone.** The portion of the ambush site where fires are **concentrated** to isolate, trap, and destroy the enemy.
 - c. **Point ambush.** An ambush where forces are deployed to support the attack of a single kill zone.
 - d. **Area ambush.** An ambush where forces are deployed to mutually support numerous killing zones.
 - (1) **Deliberate ambush.** A planned and rehearsed ambush established on or near a specified location **to destroy or capture a specific enemy target**.
 - (2) **Ambush of opportunity.** An ambush established on or near a specified location **to destroy or capture the first suitable target encountered**.
 - e. **Release Point.** The position right before the ambush site where the patrol leader passes control to individual/unit team leaders.
 - f. **Objective Rally Point (ORP).** A covered and concealed position behind the ambush site where the patrol makes its final preparations before occupying the ambush site and where the patrol reorganizes after the accomplishment of the mission.

4. **GENERAL ORGANIZATION.** Ambush patrols are task organized as other combat patrols including a patrol headquarters, an assault unit, and a security unit. In some cases they will also include a support unit. (See Figure 1.)

TASK ORGANIZATION FOR AN AMBUSH PATROL

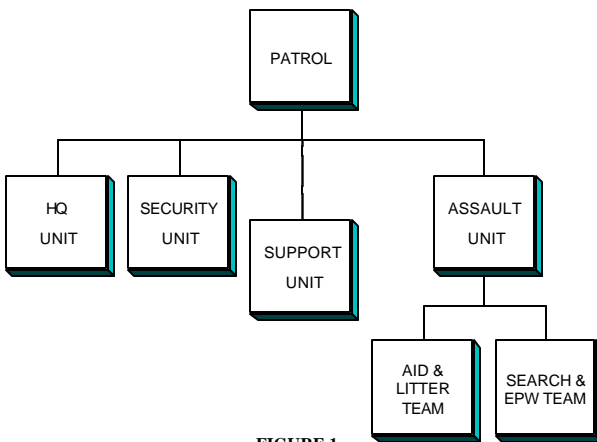


FIGURE 1

5. FUNDAMENTALS OF A SUCCESSFUL AMBUSH

a. **Favorable terrain.** Select an area for ambush in which the *enemy is canalized* between two natural or existing obstacles whereby his opportunity to attack or escape is limited. The ambush patrol should have *maximum cover and concealment*, not only for firing positions, but also for routes of withdrawal. The enemy should be offered as little protection from fire as possible.

b. **Prior planning**

(1) A **deliberate ambush** is based upon **extensive knowledge of the enemy and terrain** and is *planned and rehearsed in detail*. All likely enemy reactions to the ambush are examined and planned counteractions are developed and rehearsed.

(2) An **ambush of opportunity** is based upon **limited information about the enemy and terrain**. All likely enemy reactions to the ambush are examined to the best extent possible; counteractions are planned and developed, and when possible rehearsed.

(3) The following planning considerations apply to ambush patrols:

(a) **Routes.** A **primary route** is planned to allow the patrol to depart friendly lines, enter the ambush site *from the rear*, and withdraw safely back to friendly lines following the execution of the ambush. An **alternate route** is planned in the same manner. **The kill zone should not be entered before the execution of the ambush.**

(b) **Ambush site.** An ambush site should provide for favorable fields of fire, occupation and preparation of concealed positions, canalization of the target into the kill zone, and covered routes of withdrawal to enable the ambush force to break contact.

(c) **Occupation of the ambush site.** **Occupation of the ambush site is planned and rehearsed in detail** well before conducting the ambush patrol. Every member of the patrol must be thoroughly aware of the occupation plan.

(d) **Suitable objective rally point (ORP).** The ORP should be easily recognizable to all patrol members, be defensible for at least a short time, provide cover and concealment for the patrol, and provide covered and concealed withdraw routes from the ambush site.

(e) **Local security.** *Security is essential in ambushes and must be maintained to the flanks and rear of the ambush site upon occupation.*

(f) **Surprise and shock.** *Surprise allows the ambush force to seize and retain control of the situation.* Surprise with an ambush patrol is achieved by careful planning and preparation; stealth during movement and occupation; violence, shock and fire superiority during execution. *Shock allows the ambush force to overwhelm a surprised enemy.* A shock effect is accomplished by a sudden and violent massing of fires. An ambush that achieves surprise but fails to achieve

shock will be far less successful than one that achieves both shock and surprise.

(g) Patience. *Patience is essential if surprise is to be maintained.* Once the ambush site is occupied, all patrol members must remain motionless and observe strict noise discipline.

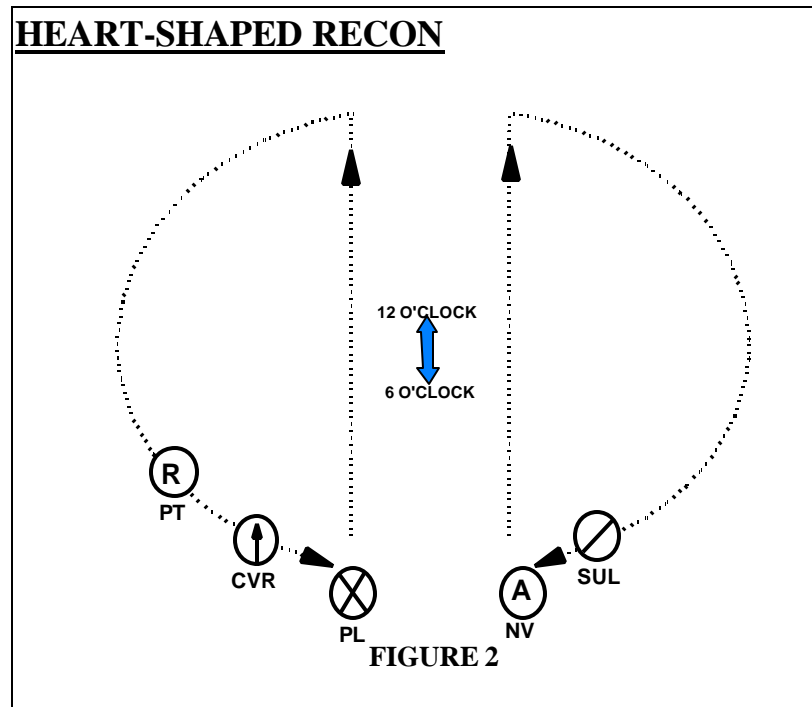
(h) Coordinated fires. All weapons must be positioned and all fires, including those of available fire support agencies (artillery and mortars), must be *coordinated to achieve a combined arms effect and the isolation of the kill zone to prevent escape or reinforcement.* Fire control measures must include withholding the unit's fire until the enemy has moved into the kill zone, opening fire at the proper time, and the lifting or shifting of supporting fires when the attack includes assault of the target. Initiation of appropriate actions if the ambush is prematurely detected and a timely and orderly withdrawal of the ambush force must also be planned.

6. **OCCUPATION OF THE OBJECTIVE RALLY POINT (ORP).** In his order, the patrol leader (PL) designates the tentative location of his ORP. The ORP is a location near the objective at which final preparations are made before occupation. The ORP should be *easily recognizable, provide cover and concealment, and be located on a piece of terrain that lends itself to the defense.* The ORP must be close enough to the objective to allow for expedient, covered and concealed movement of units and teams into the objective. However, it should be out of sight, sound, and the effects of small arms fire from the objective, as well as away from natural lines of drift for enemy units or noncombatants. Remember, this location will remain tentative until it is confirmed as suitable as a result of the leader's reconnaissance. The following are two possible methods of occupation:

a. Method 1 (Deliberate Occupation)

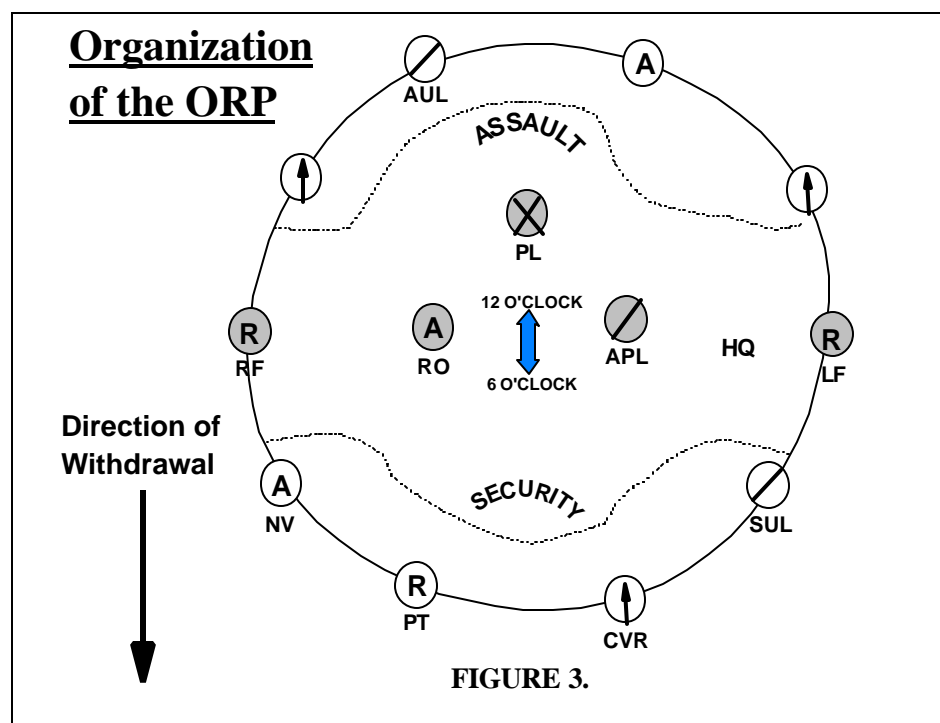
(1) As the patrol approaches its tentative ORP, the PL halts the patrol. The PL then **moves forward with the security unit** to ensure the area is suitable for the ORP and that no enemy forces are nearby. The team and their actions are delineated in the patrol order. Before departing, the PL leaves a **five-point contingency plan** with the assistant patrol leader (APL), who remains with the main body of the patrol.

(2) The five-man team moves to the tentative ORP in a *formation that provides for all-around security.* Upon arrival at the tentative ORP, the entire team conducts a **heart-shaped reconnaissance** of the area (see Figure 2). The unit moves far enough forward through the tentative site to ensure the area is clear and that it can accommodate the entire patrol. When the recon is complete, the **PL confirms it as the ORP**. The point, cover, and security unit leader (SUL) remain at 6 o'clock in the ORP while the **PL & navigator move back to guide the remainder of the patrol into the ORP**.



(3) Once in the ORP, the patrol establishes a *hasty perimeter that provides for good all-around security.* In his order, the PL normally specifies the locations within the clock system for respective units and key individuals. The PL designates 12 o'clock as the main body arrives, ensuring that the **occupation of the ORP is completed expeditiously and with a minimum of movement and shifting.** (See Figure 3.)

(4) The security unit and assault unit normally position themselves so that they can easily transition into patrol formation upon withdrawal from the ambush site.



(5) If a support unit is utilized, then the *positioning of the support unit is based upon the enemy situation and location relative to the ORP*. If, for example, the last enemy sighting was in the direction of 3 o'clock, then the support unit would be placed at 3 o'clock. This way, the patrol has a weapons system positioned to deliver effective fire in the event an attack occurred on the ORP. When the enemy situation is unknown, the **support unit positions to provide coverage of the most likely avenue of approach**.

b. **Method 2 (Recon by Occupation)**. This technique is used when *speed is the primary concern or when the PL's navigation is off*. With this method, the PL decides he has arrived at the location of his tentative ORP and organizes his patrol as detailed in the patrol order.

7. LEADER'S RECONNAISSANCE OF THE AMBUSH SITE

a. Once the ORP is secured and occupied, the PL conducts a leader's reconnaissance of the ambush site. Leaving the APL with a **five-point contingency plan**, the PL takes the flanks, unit leaders, and a radio operator if the patrol has **more than one**.

b. The APL remains at the ORP during the leader's reconnaissance. *The APL ensures the patrol at the ORP maintains security and reestablishes the ORP's perimeter.*

c. The PL ensures there is adequate all-around security when moving from the ORP to the release point.

d. During movement, the PL and the assault unit leader (AUL) both keep an *accurate azimuth and pace count from the ORP to the release point to prevent any disorientation or delay when moving back to the ORP*.

e. While conducting the recon of the ambush site, **everyone in the objective area must exercise noise discipline**. Marines must not move any closer to the kill zone than is absolutely necessary to accomplish the recon. The PL ensures the appropriate security is in place throughout the recon. *Marines within the recon party will engage the enemy only if compromised, fired upon, or on command of the PL.* The following sequence should be executed during the leader's recon of the ambush site:

(1) At the tentative release point the flanks are placed in temporary positions to provide **flank security during the PL's recon of the ambush site**.

(2) The **PL and SUL conduct a recon of the ambush site** to confirm its suitability, fields of fire and kill zone.

(3) The PL then positions the flanks in their final ambush positions.

(4) The PL and SUL then move back to the center of the ambush site. *The SUL places his phone (TA312*

or TA1), ties off the wire, and trails the wire out to each of the flank's positions. If demolitions such as claymores are used, the PL coordinates their emplacement and runs the firing wires back to the SUL's position.

(5) If the ambush patrol includes a support unit, once the flanks are wired and demolitions placed, the PL moves back to the release point and guides forward the support unit leader (SPL). The PL directs the SPL to his tentative position and designates sectors of fire for his crew served weapons and unit. *To maximize their destructive effects, machine guns are normally assigned a principal direction of fire (PDF) along the long axis of the kill zone.* Once sectors of fire are confirmed and **machine gun tripods placed**, the PL and the SPL return to the release point. **The SUL remains at the center of the ambush site and monitors the phones to both flanks.**

(6) The PL then directs the assault unit leader (AUL) to his tentative positions within the ambush site. Additionally, the *PL designates sectors of fire within the kill zone.* The PL and AUL then return to the release point.

f. The **PL and other unit leaders then return to the ORP leaving the SUL and flanks in place at the ambush site.**

g. If deemed necessary, two members of the patrol may be tasked to remain at the ORP in order to provide security (for packs, gear for follow-on missions, etc.). In this case, at least one member of this security detail will accompany the leader's recon of the ambush site. This is done so that the position of the ambush site in relation to the ORP is known to the security detail. When necessary, security of the ORP is normally tasked to the point man and the navigator.

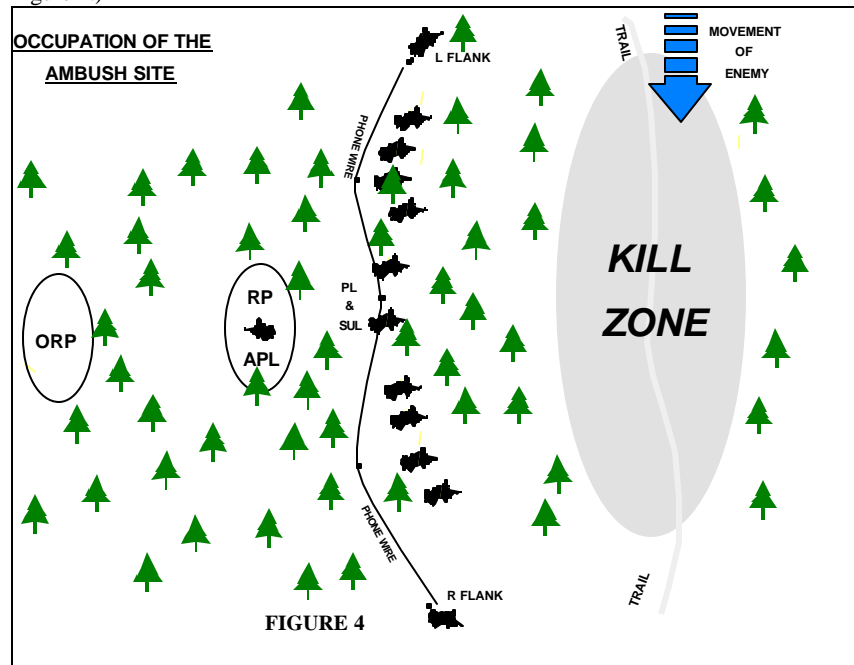
8. **OCCUPATION OF THE AMBUSH SITE.** **The patrol occupies the ambush site at the latest possible time.** *This reduces the risk of discovery as well as the amount of time men must remain still and quiet.* On signal of the PL the patrol departs the ORP. As the patrol arrives **at the release point, the patrol will move into the ambush site in the following sequence:**

a. The PL will lead the remaining members of the security unit into their position in the ambush site.

b. If utilized, the *support unit leader will then lead his unit into the ambush site.* They then occupy positions as designated by the support unit leader.

c. The *assault unit is last to occupy the ambush site.* The assault team occupies positions as designated by the assault unit leader.

d. The **APL positions away from the PL, normally to the rear of the ambush site at the release point.** (See Figure 4.)



9. ACTIONS DURING OCCUPATION

- Unit leaders assign *sectors of fire to ensure mutual support, overlapping fires and coverage of the kill zone.*
- Unit leaders position their men and point out individual, team, and unit sectors of fire.
- Unit leaders then *camouflage each of their men* as necessary by covering them with leaves, brush, soil, etc.

d. Once in position, everyone remains **absolutely motionless** while maintaining observation within their assigned sectors of fire. **They will fire into the killing zone only on signal of the PL or if they are prematurely detected**

10. **EXECUTION OF THE AMBUSH** In his patrol order the PL designates **the signals for the execution of the ambush**. These signals include the following: the signal to alert; to initiate the ambush; to cease fire/search the kill zone; to reinstate fires; and to withdraw from the ambush site.

a. **Alert signal**

(1) The **flank security normally is in the best position to alert the PL of the enemy's approach**. They do so by using the field telephone, announcing the number and direction of the enemy approaching. *It is important that all phone operators monitor the phones continuously. Ringing the phone is not an option; it alerts the enemy.*

(2) The PL may also plan a silent signal, such as tug lines, to other members of the patrol. Tugging on the line signals the alert of the enemy's approach.

b. **Signal to initiate the ambush.** The *PL controls the signal to initiate the ambush*. On signal, the patrol fires into the kill zone with as heavy a volume of accurate fire as possible. Properly delivered fires (including demolition, claymores, mines, etc.) will contribute to the surprise and destruction of the target. **The signal to initiate must be:**

(1) **Casualty producing**

(2) **Appropriate to the target ambushed**

(3) **Reliable and known by all members of the patrol**

c. **Signals to cease/search kill zone.** The PL ceases fire into the kill zone by either an *audible or visual signal*.

(1) If the patrol's mission is to capture enemy personnel, equipment or documents, the PL may send a search and enemy prisoner of war (S/EPW) team into the killing zone. When designated, the **search and EPW team normally enter the kill zone from one flank and exit the kill zone through the opposite flank**. *The dispatch of teams into the kill zone is dangerous because it takes time during a very critical moment. The patrol must carefully plan and rehearse the searching of the kill zone to allow for thorough coverage of the team's actions, control of friendly fires, and most important, the speedy execution of the search.*

(2) If the patrol's mission is to destroy or capture enemy personnel and/or equipment, the PL may have the assault unit clear the ambush site.

d. **Signal to reinstate.** If the enemy is not effectively neutralized, the PL may reinstate the ambush before the search or withdraw. If search and EPW teams have already entered the kill zone, reinstating fires into the kill zone is not an option.

e. **Signal for withdrawal.** Once all actions in the ambush site have been completed, the PL directs the withdrawal of the patrol from the ambush site. This is effectively accomplished by either an audible or visual signal.

11. **WITHDRAWAL TO THE ORP.** When the PL issues the signal to withdraw, the *units and teams move rapidly from the ambush site*. The patrol **withdraws by unit back to the ORP through the release point, where the APL ensures accountability out of the ambush site**. The **assault unit withdraws first**, and is led back to the ORP by the Assault Unit Leader. The remainder of the units then withdraw, with the security unit and the flanks being the last to withdraw. Speed and minimal confusion are paramount during withdrawal. *To minimize confusion, especially in the dark, the APL touches each man at the release point to ensure accountability.*

a. The PL uses **indirect fires as necessary to cover the patrol's withdrawal**.

b. As the patrol returns to the ORP they conduct a short security halt to regain their formation for movement, redistribute ammunition and make head counts.

c. The patrol then **departs the ORP rapidly** to prevent pursuit by the enemy.

12. **DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION.** After departing the ORP, the patrol moves *at least one terrain feature away* and conducts a long security halt to pass any information gained by the S/EPW team and distribute captured documents and equipment.

SECTION II: RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS

1. **RECONNAISSANCE.** A mission undertaken to obtain, by visual observation or other detection methods, information about the activities and/or resources of an enemy or potential enemy, or to gather data concerning meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area. Therefore, reconnaissance is no more than the efforts used to find a given subject.

2. **SURVEILLANCE.** The systematic observation of surface, or subsurface areas, places, persons or things by visual, electronic, photographic or other means. Surveillance efforts maintain constant watch over a given objective from a vantage point. A vantage point is an advantageous location on the ground that allows you optimal observation of the objective.

3. **PURPOSE.** Reconnaissance patrols are among the commander's most reliable means of obtaining timely and accurate information about the enemy and terrain. The patrol must *move into hostile areas and remain undetected to gather information on specific targets*. The following are examples of specific missions that reconnaissance patrols are assigned:

a. **With regard to the enemy**

- (1) Location of enemy forces, installations, equipment.
- (2) Identification of enemy units, equipment and patterns of operation.
- (3) Strength, disposition and movement of enemy forces with particular emphasis on the location of their reserve units.
- (4) Location of enemy command centers, lines of support and communication.
- (5) New or special types of weapons.
- (6) Unusual enemy activity.
- (7) Location and size of enemy wire obstacles and minefields.

b. **With regard to terrain**

- (1) Location and size of natural and man-made obstacles.
- (2) Location, trafficability and construction of roads or bridges.
- (3) Location of fords or crossing points.
- (4) Location of insertion and extraction sites (beaches, LZs, etc.)
- (5) Location of control measures (SBF position, LOA, PLD).

4. **TASK ORGANIZATION.** While specialized reconnaissance units are specifically task organized for reconnaissance missions, infantry units use their rifle squads to perform reconnaissance type missions. Depending on the type of reconnaissance mission, the size of the patrol, and the characteristics of the objective to be observed, the patrol is composed of separate security and reconnaissance units (see Figure 5a), or a combination of the two (see Figure 5b). Whichever the technique, unit integrity (i.e., fireteam) should generally be maintained.

5. TYPES OF RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS

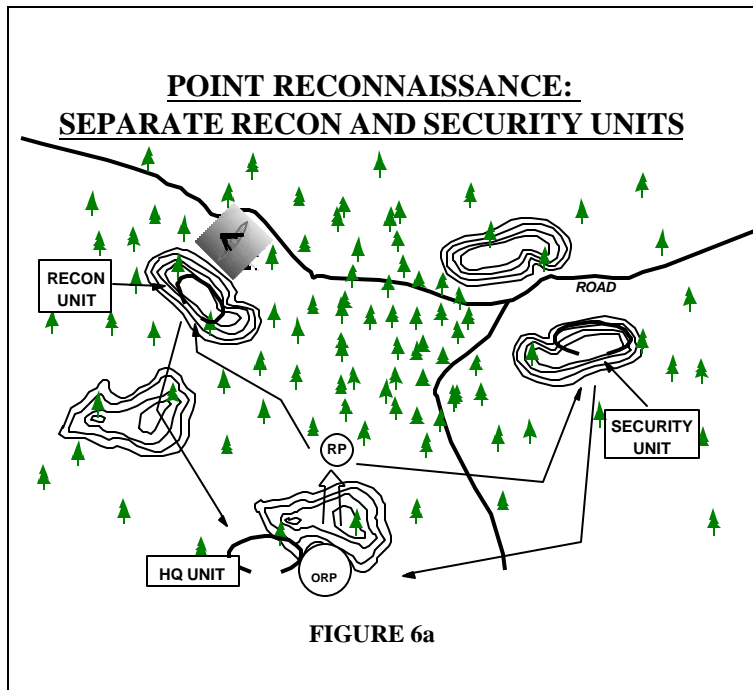
a. **Point reconnaissance.** A directed effort to obtain detailed information concerning specific terrain and enemy activity within a **specific location**. The objective of the reconnaissance may be to obtain timely information about a particular town, bridge, road junction, or other terrain feature or enemy activity critical to operations.

(1) Point Reconnaissance using Separate Recon and Security Units. (See Figure 6a.)

(a) A reconnaissance patrol occupies its ORP using the same basic techniques used for ambush patrols.

(b) The HQ Unit remains and secures the ORP while the mission is being executed. The recon and security units depart the ORP together and move towards the release point (RP). In many instances, the ORP can double as the RP.

(c) From the RP, the security unit moves to a vantage point to observe the enemy's most likely avenue of approach to the objective to provide early warning for the recon unit. Once the security unit is positioned, the recon unit departs the RP and moves to a predetermined vantage point to conduct its point reconnaissance. At a predetermined time or event, both the security and recon units return to the ORP.

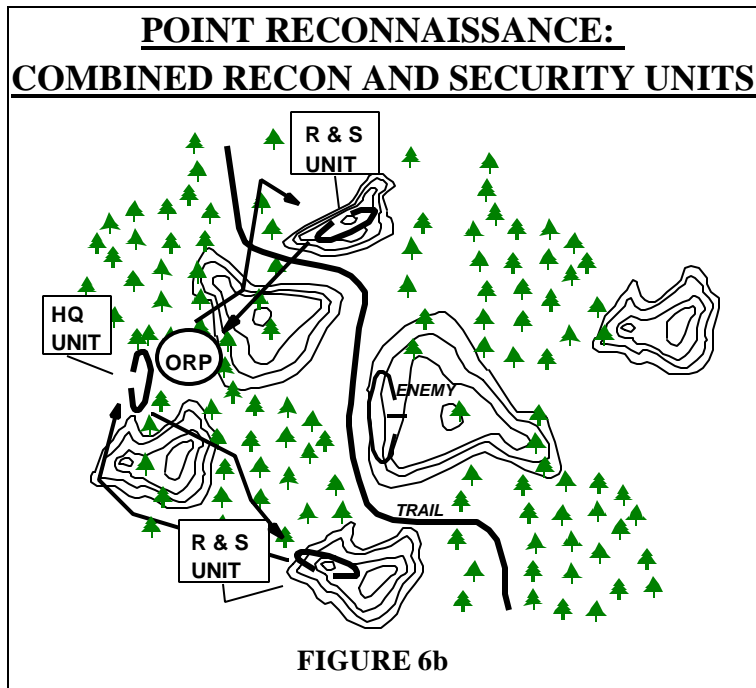


(2) Point Reconnaissance using Combined Recon and Security Units. (See Figure 6b.)

(a) The reconnaissance patrol occupies the ORP. The HQ Unit remains at the ORP and provides security.

(b) The two recon/security units depart the ORP and move to their predetermined vantage points (VPs) and conduct a point reconnaissance of the objective. Each unit is responsible for maintaining its own security at its VPs.

(c) Once each R&S unit has accomplished its mission (or at a predetermined time or event), it returns to the ORP and link-up with the HQ Unit.



(3) **NOTE:** Rifle squads are easily task organized to accomplish reconnaissance missions. In many instances the HQ Unit (1 fireteam and the squad leader) can serve as a recon unit as well.

b. **Area reconnaissance.** An effort to obtain information pertaining to an extended area or certain locations within an extended area. The patrol may reconnoiter the area, maintain surveillance over the area, or make a point reconnaissance of a series of locations within the area. Zone reconnaissance and route reconnaissance are two types of area reconnaissance.

(1) **Zone reconnaissance.** A directed effort to obtain detailed information concerning all routes, obstacles (to include chemical or biological contamination), terrain, and enemy forces **within a particular zone** defined by specific boundaries. The methods used to conduct a zone reconnaissance follow the same principles used for an area reconnaissance. However, due to the area covered in a zone recon mission, a force larger than a squad is tasked with these types of missions. Several different methods can be utilized to conduct a zone reconnaissance:

(a) **Fan method**

- 1 The PL selects an ORP within the zone.
- 2 Patrol recons/occupies the ORP.
- 3 The PL selects reconnaissance routes to and from the ORP, forming a fan-shaped pattern around the ORP (routes overlap to ensure coverage of the entire area).
- 4 The PL sends reconnaissance teams out along adjacent routes to prevent intrapatrol contact, security, and HQ units remain in the ORP.
- 5 Teams return to ORP; information is reported.
- 6 Steps 3-5 are repeated until entire zone has been covered. (See Figure 7a.)

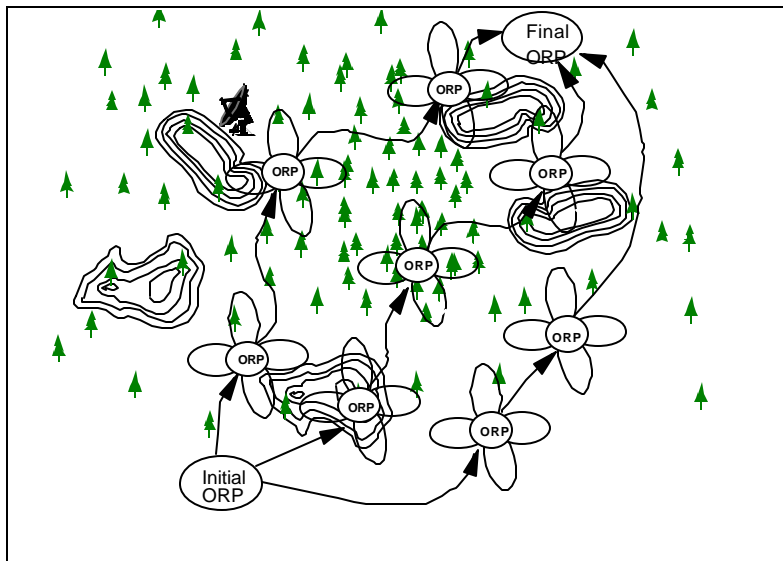


Figure 7a

(b) **Converging routes method**

- 1 The PL selects the ORP, reconnaissance routes through zone, and a final ORP.
- 2 R&S teams are sent out one per route (HQ unit usually moves with center team).
- 3 Teams select their own intermediate ORPs and reconnoiter their own routes by the fan method.
- 4 The Entire patrol links up at the final ORP at a designated time. (See Figure 7b.)

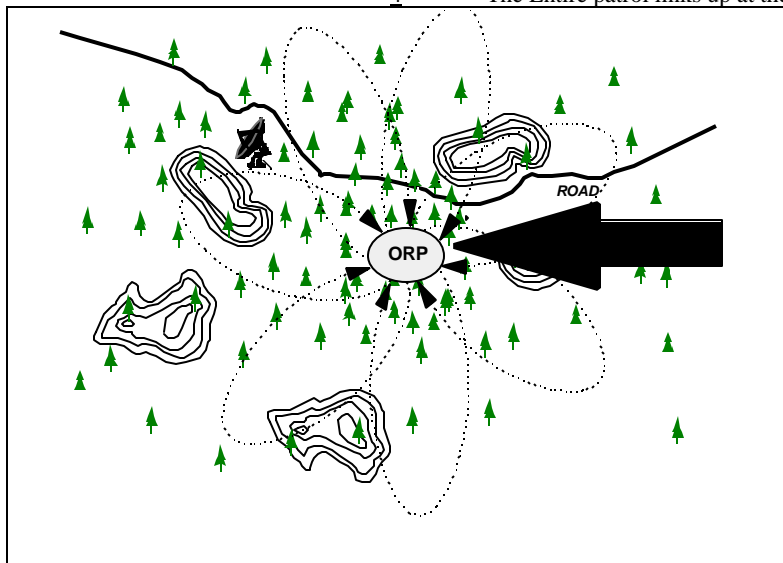


Figure 7b

(c) **Successive sectors method**

- 1 The PL selects an initial ORP, a series of reconnaissance routes, and several intermediate ORPs.
- 2 R&S teams are sent out one per route (HQ unit usually moves with center team).
- 3 Entire patrol links up at the next ORP at a designated time.
- 4 When the patrol links up, the PL again designates reconnaissance routes, a link-up time, and the next ORP.

- 5 This action continues until the entire zone has been reconnoitered.
- 6 Once the reconnaissance is completed, the patrol returns to friendly lines (or a patrol base). (See Figure 7c.)

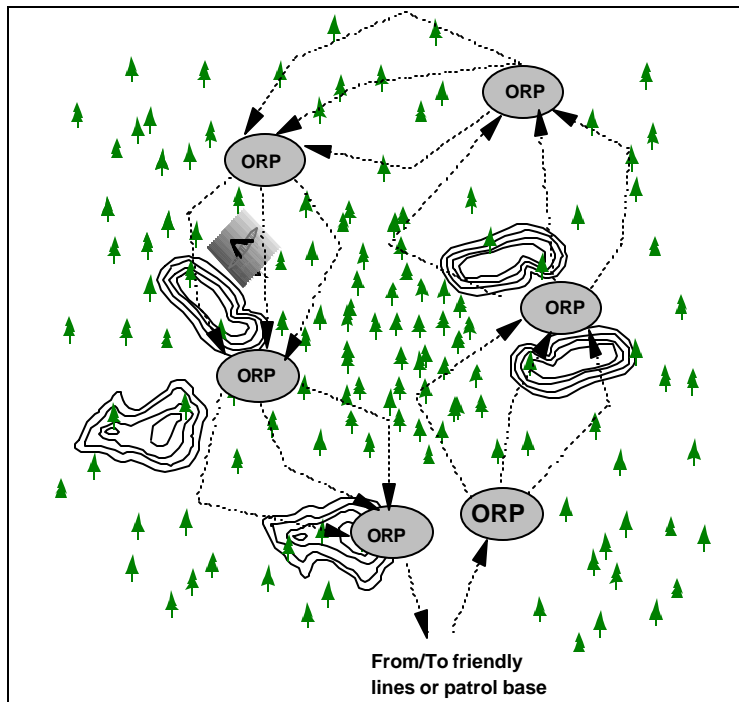


Figure 7c

(2) **Route reconnaissance.** A reconnaissance along a specific line of communication, such as a road, railway, or waterway. The purpose of a route recon is to provide information on route conditions and activities along the route. Lateral routes and terrain features that can control the use of the route must be reconnoitered as well. Narrower in scope than the zone reconnaissance, the limits of a route reconnaissance mission are normally described by a line of departure, a specific route, and a limit of advance. Reconnaissance units may move to several positions, along or next to the specific route, to conduct a thorough route reconnaissance. The use of the fan method is commonly used to reconnoiter areas within direct fire range of a specific route. (See Figure 7d.)

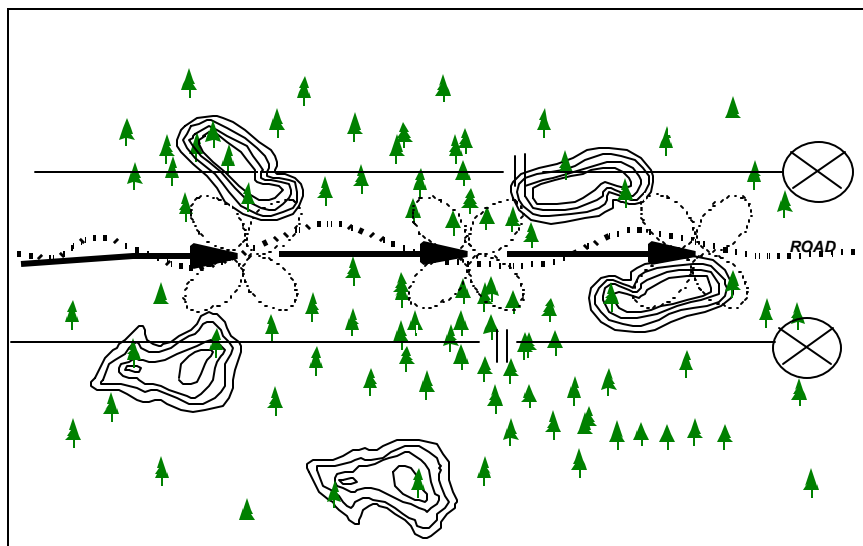


Figure 7d

c. *Zone and route reconnaissance patrols are normally longer in duration than a point reconnaissance; therefore, they generally require platoon size or larger units.*

6. **RECONNAISSANCE FROM A PATROL BASE** A patrol base can be used in conjunction with any of the methods mentioned above. Specifics on setting up and running patrols from a patrol base, as well as specific procedures to link-up after each reconnaissance missions will be covered in B0333, Conduct of the Patrol III.

7. **SUMMARY.** This class has discussed the tools and techniques necessary to conduct effective ambush and reconnaissance patrols. These important types of patrols will be conducted during upcoming field exercises.

**TASK ORGANIZATION OF A SQUAD-SIZE
RECONNAISSANCE PATROL
(COMBINED R&S UNITS)**

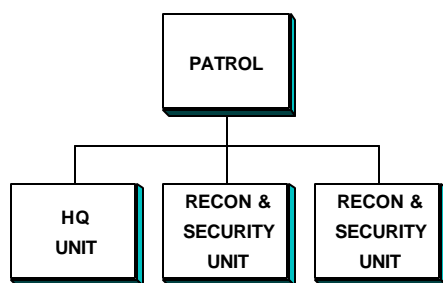


FIGURE 5b

**TASK ORGANIZATION OF A SQUAD-SIZE
RECONNAISSANCE PATROL
(SEPARATE R&S UNITS)**

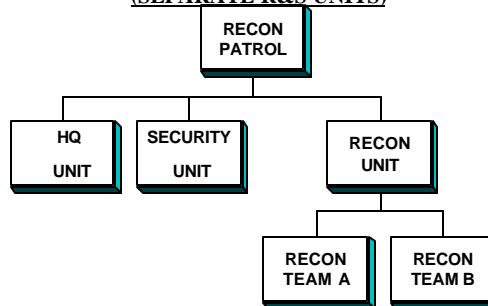


FIGURE 5a